

**WASHINGTON** -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan has been unanimously elected co-chairman of Florida's 27-member congressional delegation. Florida Republicans in the delegation voted to name Buchanan to the position at its monthly meeting in Washington last week. The Democratic co-chair is Congressman Alcee Hastings D-FL 23.

"Vern has earned the respect and support of his colleagues in Washington," said Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, R-FL 21 "His business background, expertise in creating jobs and influential position on the House Ways and Means Committee is tremendously important to Florida."

"I am humbled and honored by the confidence my colleagues have placed in me," Buchanan said. "I look forward to working with the delegation on issues important to Florida."

With the addition of two new congressional districts, Buchanan noted that Florida will have the third largest delegation in the U.S. House next year after California and Texas. "We represent a powerful voting bloc in Congress that can work to advance Florida's agenda and priorities," Buchanan said, noting that issues such as protection of the Everglades and hurricane and flood insurance have bipartisan support.

The position takes effect in the next Congress that convenes in January. Republicans currently hold 19 congressional seats in Florida and the Democrats hold six seats. With the addition of the two new congressional districts the total will become 27.